

From linux dt so see .verybest

Up for a cup of coffee*

Before I'm slated to pinch hit, Gray old Skipper nods for me to sit next to him while he flashes bewildering signals to his coaches.

"Now I know you're a college guy, but I want to ask a simple question. How deeply do you know Tozzi?"

Mostly from TV. Future Hall of Famer. I'm afraid to approach him."

He turns me a face so open it seems to be flattened. Like a whiskery pieplate.

"We don't want you if you're afraid, first□ Second, Brother's Keeper. What I believe. What makes a team□ Okay, a hypothetical. We're checking into the Sheraton, bags all over the lobby. He falls over a few. Vodka. Bleeding. Just you there with him. Do you say 'Listen□ Got a date. Hey over there at the desk□ Come over here and help. I can't stay□" He whips into a frenzy of signals.

His mocking my voice has hurt. I'm evidently a hothouse flower.

"I wouldn't do that in a thousand years□" I inform this gray, sudden dervish.

He stops his hands to grunt approval.

I finally get to bat after Skip's lesson in fellowship or whatever, and soon the umpire is calling strikes on any pitch that doesn't sail into the seats behind the catcher. I'm used to the wild firethrowers in the minor leagues, but Suds Dooley, old magician, tosses me slow junk.

I vow to swing at anything I could reach and manage to knock one off the very end of the bat. It stings my hands ferociously. The ball lands on the bag at first base and shoots off right. I leg it out, a hit□

"That's some cue shot, Rookie," sneers the First Baseman,

"You're vibrating all over, even down to your pecker"

Tub, First base coach snaps, "We can do without the cheesy sarcasm. Hand the ball over for his trophy case: A hit in his debut"

"That makes him a debutante"

"Ignore him." Tub massages my shoulders. "They were hiring the handicapped when he staggered by."

I think it's my turn to throw an insult, but I'm too nervous. Coach whispers "Stay close to the base. You're not threat to anybody. Then he adds, "Categorical imperative. What you do from here on forms a universal moral matrix for everyone"

Excuse me

"You're on your own." That usually meant to steal second if I see a a good chance. And catch holy hell if I fail.

"I don't give situational logic," Tub hissed. "To get to Y, you must do X."

That's nice, Coach Tub. I can see the way.

Mugger was up to bat. Coach couldn't have spoken to him this intellectual way. You know how vulgar people will prescribe how to cure a really high strung woman? "She needs a week in the woods with a Polack with a seven word vocabulary." Well, he's the Polack.

I knew him as a series string of grunts playing video games. Well he spoke with his bat, ripped one past me and the snotty first baseman.

I ran like hell with Slice, the third base coach windmilling for me to come there, pointing down for me to slide, which I did, mostly on my ass. Bumping. Not pretty, I apologized. He shrugged in his bony, razor-like way.

"No matter, just a deficiency in a learned pattern. Essence precedes existence. You are man first and then ballplayer. Certainly not process like your slide. Even if

you had accomplished it with some art. Still just a process."

I was getting up to here with thought□ And had to get some baseball info□ But you'll have to tell me when you think a fly ball is deep enough for me to tag up and try to score□ I pleaded.

The other team was putting in another pitcher, a fat boy seesawing in from the center field gate.

"You don't listen, Rookie□ Rely on your instincts as a creative agent□ If you're authentic, you'll stay up here in the big leagues."

But Skip stresses teamwork□ Brother's Keeper□

"Not necessarily mutually exclusive. But, you've also touched upon higher echelon differences shouldn't get into. All the coaches argue philosophy and it can get heated□

A dynamic tension keeps us in first place. As does a mix of players. The Neanderthal Mugger drooling over there at first base,"he pointed a long finger, "contrasted to bull pen catcher who's liberation theory theologian. Actually finds small churches to preach in when we're on the road. But not for long. People attend church for reassurance, to be told they put in a good week and another's coming. Not that the institution itself, in consonance with Business, holds the people down. Marx, no?

At any rate, he jabbars to the pitchers he's warming up and they're all practically Communists by now.

I wandered two steps towards home plate when when our shortstop who was probably a Zoroastrian raw vegetable mystic of the breakaway Saturn worshiping sect rocketed a line drive to the third baseman who stepped on the bag to double me off.

"Daydreaming lacks the solidity of vision," he scolded my back as I trotted to our bench, "but many know no other."

So, not just our team full of it.

Worryingly, my head about exploding, I try to snatch my

glove, to run out to the field, but Skipper lifts me for defensive purposes for Hector, wily child protected by bizarre dialectical Spanish the Puerto Rican batting coach couldn't fathom. From some Caribbean mountainous interior.

Untouched by academics, he was always laughing.

*denoting a short stay in the major leagues